

GOD'S WORKS MADE MANIFEST

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A SERMON
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“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents” (that he was born blind):
“but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”
John 9:3

NEVER attribute any special sorrow endured by men to some special sin. There is a tendency to consider that those on whom the tower in Siloam fell must have been sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. And if any have met with a very sudden death, we are apt to suppose that they must have been exceedingly guilty—but it is not so.

Very godly men have been burned to death in a train. I remember one who came to that terrible end. Many holy men have been drowned on board ship when they have been going about their Master's errands. Some of the most gracious men that I ever met have dropped dead without a moment's warning. You cannot judge of a man's state before God by that which happens to him in the order of providence. And it is very unkind, ungenerous and almost inhuman, to sit down, like the friends of Job, and suppose that because Job is greatly afflicted, he must therefore be greatly sinful. It is not so.

All afflictions are not chastisements for sin—there are some afflictions that have quite another end and object. They are sent to refine, sent as a holy discipline, sent as sacred excavators, to make more room in the heart for Christ and His love. Indeed, you know that it is written, “As many as I tenderly love, I rebuke and chasten.” “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

It was, therefore, in the last degree, absurd to suppose that if a man was born blind, it was a punishment for the sin of his parents, or a punishment sent beforehand for some sin which he might commit by and by. Our Savior bids us look quite another way and regard infirmities and physical evils as sent to be a space wherein God may display His power and His grace.

It was very specially so in this particular instance, and I am going to push the fact further, and say that even sin itself, existing as it does everywhere, existing especially in some, may afford what we call “elbow room,” for the grace of God and may, indeed, become a platform upon which the wonderful power, and patience, and sovereignty of divine grace may be displayed.

That will be the subject that we shall talk about tonight, how God takes opportunity from the sorrows and the sins of men to make manifest His own works to His own glory. As this man was born blind, in order that, through his blindness, the power of God might be seen in giving him sight, so I think there are many in whom the power of God may very readily be seen, and the works of God be very clearly made manifest.

I. So, first, let us inquire what works these are. **WHAT WORKS OF GOD ARE SEEN IN THE SALVATION OF MEN?**

There is a man over yonder who is all out of order. There is nothing right about him. He is a man upside down. His heart loves that which will ruin it and does not love that which would bless it. His understanding is darkened. He puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. His will has become very domineering and has usurped power which it never ought to possess.

If you will study him well, you will not make much of him. He is all out of gear, like a piece of machinery in which the wheels do not operate correctly. To describe him briefly by one word, I should say that he is in a state of chaos, everything is in confusion and disorder, tossed up and down. "Well," says one, "that is my case. I am like that tonight."

Now, the first work of God that we read of in the Bible is the work of *creation*—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." When the fullness of time was come for the fitting up of the world, which event we generally call creation, although it was really the arrangement of that which had been created, then the Lord came forth, and the Spirit of God, with outspread wings, brooded over chaos and brought order out of confusion.

Oh, that the Spirit of the Lord would tonight come and brood over that man's confused and confounded mind where everything is tossed about in wild disorder! He cannot tell why he was born, nor for what object he is living. He seems to have no purpose in life, he is tossed to and fro like a log in the ocean. His passions fly from vanity to vanity and you cannot put him into order.

His mother tried it, but he scorned to be tied to her apron strings. Many friends have tried it since then, but he has now taken the bit into his mouth and has run away—he refuses to obey the reins. O God, if You will come tonight and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus, Your creating work will be made manifest in him!

If You will mold, and model, and form, and fashion him until he shall be a vessel fit for Your use, then will the work of God begin to be manifested in him. Oh, that it might be so! There are some of us here who can bear witness that God is a great Creator, for He has made all things new within us and transformed what before was chaos into a world of beauty and delight wherein He delights to dwell.

After the world was created, God's next work was that of *light-making*. The earth was created, but it was swathed in darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." No sun, no moon, no stars had yet appeared. No light had yet fallen upon the earth—perhaps by reason of dense vapors which shut out the light. God did nothing but say, "Let there be light; and there was light."

Well now, tonight, there has come in here one who is not only without form and void, and dreadfully tossed about, but one who is himself dark, and in the dark. He wants the light, but he has none. He does not know the way of life. He does not see a ray of hope that he ever will find the way. He seems shut up in gloomy, thick, Egyptian night, and perhaps, worst of all, he does not know his true condition—he calls darkness light, and prides himself that he can see, when really he can see nothing at all.

Lord, speak the word, and say, "Let there be light," and the man will see the light, and see it at once! I am quite sure that, whether I can speak with power, or not, God can speak with power, and standing here, it is to my heart a sweet solace that He can, at this moment, find out the most darkened sinner in the building, sitting or standing anywhere about, and the light can penetrate into his soul in less time than it takes me to say the words.

And to his own surprise the darkness shall be light about him and the Egyptian night shall be turned into the midday of infinite love and mercy. Pray God that it may be so, brethren. Lift up a silent prayer to heaven, for this light-giving, this illumination is a special work of God, and there are many who are now in the dark, in whom it is possible for this work of God to be manifested.

After these two works of God are done, after we have had creation and light-bringing, still there is death and there is need of the divine work of *resurrection*. What is the use of a form beautifully fashioned if it be dead, and what is the use of light shining with all its brilliance upon a corpse? Yet in this house of prayer there are tonight some who are dead in trespasses and sins.

They do not feel the weight of sin, yet to a living man it is an intolerable burden. They are not wounded by the two-edged sword of the Lord, though a living man is soon cut and gashed by it. They do not hear even the joyous notes of free grace and dying love. Though they ring out like a peal of silver bells, these dead sinners do not appreciate their sweet music. It is the work of God to make men live.

There will come a day, and perhaps sooner than we think, when all the myriads of bodies that lie in our cemeteries and churchyards will rise up from the grave to live again. That will be a manifestation of

divine power, but it will not be a greater manifestation of divine power than when a dead heart, a dead conscience, a dead will is made to live with a divine life.

Oh, that God would work that mighty miracle of mercy tonight! Pray that it may be so, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ. The dead will not pray for this resurrection—therefore let us pray for it for them. And if there be a man who does pray for it, one who cries, “Lord, make me live!” that is a proof that already there is a thrill of life shooting through him, or he would not have that living desire.

Brethren, I might thus continue working upon the line of the story of the creation and the arranging of the world in due order, but I will not—you can do that for yourselves. I want next to speak to you about the divine work of *cleansing*. There is, tonight, in this place of worship, a man who is black with filth.

He has done everything that he could do in order to rebel against God. Perhaps he is like Mr. John Newton, who describes himself somewhat thus—he says, “I was in many respects like the apostle Paul. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but there was one point in which I went beyond the apostle Paul, for he did it ignorantly, but I sinned against light and knowledge.”

Do I speak to any here who, in sinning, have transgressed very grossly because they have done what they knew was wrong and have persevered in doing it against the checks of conscience, and against the warnings of a better longing, which they have never yet been able to kill?

I am amazed, sometimes, when I have had to talk with those whose lives have certainly gone almost to the very extremity of iniquity, but who, nevertheless, all the time have had a certain inward check that would never let them go just that little piece further which would have put them beyond hope. There was always a something that they still revered, even when they pretended to disbelieve everything, and to blaspheme everything. There was some influence for good operating upon them still, as though God had a line and a hook in the jaws of leviathan—and though he ran out so far into the great deep of sin that you could not tell where he had gone, yet he had to come back again after all. God still does wonders of mercy and grace.

Now, suppose, tonight, that that black sinner, with all his years of sin, should be forgiven outright, suppose that tonight the whole of those fifty or sixty years of sin should vanish once for all, suppose that God should forgive, better still, that God should forget, suppose that, with one tremendous fling of His omnipotent arm, He should take the whole mass of that sinner's sin and cast it into the depths of the sea, what a wonder of grace that would be!

That is what God will do for everyone who trusts in Jesus. If you will come and cast yourself at His dear feet, and look up to Jesus crucified, bleeding in your stead, and believe those words of the prophet Isaiah, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” or the words of the apostle Peter, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” if you trust Jesus, the great Sin-bearer, He will make you whiter than snow. And in your case the works of God shall be manifested, for none but the Almighty God can make scarlet sinners white—and He can do it in a moment. Lord, do it now!

Suppose that another thing should happen, that a man here, or a woman, who is desperately set on mischief, should tonight be turned in an entirely opposite direction, that would be manifestly a divine work of *changing the whole current of life*. I have never seen Niagara, and I do not suppose that I ever shall, but there are some here who have seen it. Down comes the mighty flood with a tremendous crash, forever leaping down from on high.

Would you not believe him to be God who should, in a moment, make that waterfall leap upward instead of downward, and as impetuously seek the heights as now it leaps into the depths? Well, the Lord can do that with some big Niagara Fall of a sinner here this very evening. You are determined tonight to go into evil company and to commit a filthy sin.

You are determined tomorrow to grasp the drunkard's cup and not be satisfied until you have turned yourself into something below a beast. You are determined to pursue that evil business of yours, that getting money by gambling, or something worse. Yes, but if my Lord comes forth tonight, determined to save you, He will make you sing to another tune.

"Oh, but I should never be a Methodist!" says one. I do not know what you will yet be. "Oh!" says another, "you would never make a convert of me." I did not say that I could—but the Lord can make you what you think you never will be. There are some here who, if they could have seen themselves ten years ago, sitting here, and enjoying the Word, would have said, "No, no, Charlie, that is not you, I am sure, my boy," and "No, Mary, that is not you, my girl. You will never be there, there is no fear of that."

But you are here, you see, and what free grace has done for some of us, it can do for others. Lord, do it according to that mighty power which You did work in Christ when You did raise Him from the dead! Work in the same fashion in the ungodly tonight and turn them from the error of their ways to run as impetuously after You as now they run from You!

I have only one more matter to mention under this head. I think that God's works are sometimes manifested in men by *giving them great joy*. There is a person here tonight convinced of sin. Mr. Conscience has come up against him. You know Mr. Conscience—he keeps a cat-o'-nine-tails. When he is allowed to get to work and he gets tight hold of a sinner who has long kept him under hatches, he says, "Now it is my turn." And he lets you know it, believe me. Let a man once get conscience, with a cat-o'-nine-tails, laying it on, and he will never forget it. Every stroke seems to tear off a thongful of his quivering flesh. Look how the nine ploughs make deep furrows every time they fall.

"You speak," says one, "like a man who knows it." Know it? I did know it for years, while but a child. And neither night nor day could I escape from the falling of those terrible thongs. Oh, how conscience scourged me and I could find no rest anywhere till, once upon a time, I heard the divine voice that said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth," and conscience put away his cat-o'-nine-tails and my wounds were bathed in heavenly balsam, and they ceased to smart, and I was glad!

Oh, how my heart cried, "Hallelujah!" as I saw Jesus on the cross! Then I understood that God had executed the full vengeance due to my sin upon His Well-beloved, who had kindly bared His shoulder to the lash and undertaken to bear the punishment of my sin. Then did my heart leap with joy.

You notice that I am always preaching that doctrine of substitution. I cannot help it, because it is the only truth that brought me comfort. I should never have gotten out of the dungeon of despair if it had not been for that grand truth of substitution. I hope that no young lady is going to ask me to write in her album this week. That request is made to me I do not know how many days in the week, and I always write this verse in all the albums:—

*"E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."*

If you once know the power of that blessed theme, then you will see that it is a work of God to sweep away our ashes and to give us the oil of joy—to take from us our robes of mourning and to clothe us with garments of beauty—to put a new song into our mouths and to establish our goings. May you all have this blessed work of God wrought in you, to the praise of the glory of His grace!

II. Now, my second head is this, HOW ARE THESE WORKS MADE SPECIALLY MANIFEST IN SOME MEN?

I will take this blind man and just run over his life. First, *he was totally blind*. There was no sham about his blindness. He could not see a ray of light—he was totally blind—he knew nothing about light. Is there anybody here who is totally blind in a spiritual sense? You cannot see anything, my poor friend. You have not one good desire—you have not had even a good thought.

Ah, you do not know what kind of people we have in this London, but we do meet with people who, for years, seem never to have had a good thought ever cross their minds. And if someone else were to speak to them about anything that is good, or even decent, he would be talking double Dutch to them!

They do not understand it. We have multitudes of that kind in our slums, yes, and in the West End they are just as bad.

Now, when the Lord, in His infinite mercy, comes to these people who are totally blind and He makes them see, there is room for His mighty power to work there, for everybody says, "What a wonderful thing that such a person as that should be converted!"

I remember well a man with whom I have often prayed in very sweet fellowship. He was a queer fish when I first knew him, though he was a very good man afterwards. He was as eccentric a being as I ever met with—and I am sufficiently eccentric myself—but he was a dead worldling. His Sundays—well, he did not know any difference between Sunday and Monday, except that he could not be in the beer shop for quite so long on Sundays.

He said, "I had been out one Sunday morning to buy a pair of ducks and I put one in each pocket of my coat. As I went along, and saw the people going into a place of worship, I thought that I would see what it was like, I had heard that it was a decent-looking place inside."

He went, the Lord met with him—and that day those ducks did not get cooked—they had to wait till Monday. But he was himself caught and captured for Christ that day. A total change took place in him and he became a fervent Christian at once, whereas before he had been totally without any kind of religious thought, either of fear or of hope. Here was a case in which the works of God were specially made manifest. That man has gone to heaven now. Well do I remember him and how I praised God for his conversion.

But the man mentioned in our text was *born blind*. Now, there are many like that. Indeed, all people are born blind. It is original sin, from which we all suffer. Sin is a taint of the blood. We are born blind. There are some who, in a very peculiar way, are bred and born in a family utterly destitute of religion. They are brought up to despise it, or else brought up in the midst of superstition and taught to say a useless prayer to a crucifix of wood or stone.

Can these people, who are so brought up, find Christ? But they do find Christ, or rather, Christ finds them. And they hear the Gospel and it commends itself to their minds straight away. I suppose that nobody was ever more superstitious than Martin Luther was. I have seen that staircase in Rome, up which Martin Luther went on his knees. It is said to be the staircase which our Lord came down from the palace of Pilate.

I have seen the people go up and down on their knees. Just think of Luther doing it—and there came to him, as he was going up the stairs on his knees, those words, "The just shall live by faith," and he rose up at once—and he did not go on his knees any farther. Oh, that God would appear in that way to some of you!

Next, this blind man was *cured by special means*. That was another manifestation of God's works. The Savior spat, stooped down, and with His finger worked that spittle into the dust until He had made clay. Then taking it up, He began to put it over the man's eyes. I believe that God is greatly glorified by the salvation of people through the simple preaching of the Gospel, the very simplest means that can be used.

Often men say, when souls are saved in this place, as they are continually, "Well, I cannot see anything remarkable in the preacher." No, and if you were to look a great deal longer, you would see less than you see now, for there is not anything whatever in him—but there is a great deal in the Gospel. O brethren, if some preachers would only preach the Gospel, they would soon see how very superior it is to all their fine essays!

But they prepare their sermons so well. Oh, yes, I know, but did you ever hear of the man who used to prepare the potatoes before he planted them in his garden? He always boiled them—they never grew, for he had prepared all the life out of them. Now, many a boiled sermon is brought out to the people, but it never grows. It is elaborated and prepared so much that nothing will ever come out of it.

The Lord loves to bless living words spoken in simple language out of an earnest heart. The man who speaks thus does not get the glory—the glory goes to God—and thus there is room for the works of God to be manifested.

This blind man was also a specially fit sphere for God to manifest His works in, because *he was known as a public beggar*. They used to lead him up in the morning, I suppose, to the gate of the temple, and there he took his place and sat down. He was a man with a ready tongue, I should guess, so that he often used to exchange chaff with those that went by, and they recollected what kind of a man he was.

He was always very sarcastic, I suspect, and when they spoke to him, and gave him nothing, he knew how to give them something. That blind beggar was a well-known character in Jerusalem, as well known as the blind beggar of Bethnal Green—so the Savior selected him, because he was so well known—and opened his eyes.

So you have come here tonight, my friend, have you? You are well known, but I will not point you out. I do not like doing that kind of thing. There came in here, not long ago, a soldier who had been a professor of religion, but he had been a dreadful apostate and had gone back, but he wanted to hear the Gospel again.

Just over yonder, where there are two pillars, he wisely chose a place where I could not see him. But it so happened on that Sunday night, and he is the witness of it—I well remember saying, “Well, Will, you have got to come back, you know. You have got to come back. And the sooner, the better.” And Will did come back, and he sent word to me to say that Will had come back with a broken heart to find his Lord. I did not know that his name was Will, I am sure, and I did not know why he had hidden himself behind the pillars there, but God did, and He adapted the word to the person, and so He fetched Will back again.

If there is any Will, or Tom, or Jack, or Mary, or if there are any others here who have wandered far from God, O sovereign grace, bring them back, whether they are soldiers or civilians, that they may seek and find the Savior even now! This Will was well known and his restoration to Christ will, I trust, manifest the works of God in him because he was so well known.

Oh, that the Lord would hear that prayer of my friend this morning, and convert the Prince of Wales! We all said, “Amen,” to that petition. We want the Lord to bring into His church some of those who are best known, whether they be princes or whether they be beggars, that the works of God may be manifest in them.

When this man was converted, instead of being a public beggar, *he became a public confessor*. I like that answer of his, “Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” There is many a man who can say, “Well, I do not know much about theology, but I know that I was a drunkard, and I know that I am not a drunkard now. I know that I used to beat my wife, and now, God bless her, she knows how I love her! Then I could have gone into all manner of sinful company, but now, thank God, His saints are my choice companions! Once I could have gloried in my own righteousness, but now I count it dross and dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him. There is a great change in me—nobody can deny that fact—and I praise God’s name for it.”

The Lord send out a great company of men who are not ashamed of Jesus Christ! We want many men and women who will come straight out from the world and say, “Christ for me, for He has so touched my heart, that I am for Him. And if no one else will confess Him, I must do so, for He is my best Friend, my Lord, my Savior, my all.” In such cases, the works of God are made manifest.

III. Now, I have done when I have just said three or four things by way of hints upon this last point, HOW MAY GOD’S WORKS BE MANIFEST IN US?

Some of you are very poor. Others are very lame or very sickly. You are consumptive, asthmatic, full of aches, and pains, and complaints. Now, then, perhaps all this suffering is permitted that the work of God may be manifest *in your afflictions*, by your holy patience, your submission to the divine will, your persevering holiness amid all your poverty and trials. All this is sent that God’s grace may be seen in you.

Will you look at your afflictions in that light and believe that they are not sent as a punishment, but as a platform upon which God may stand and display His free grace in you? Bear well all the Lord's will, for your trials are sent for this purpose, that God's works may be manifest in you.

The same is true of *your infirmities*. We are none of us perfect, but we may also have physical infirmities. Now believe, if you are sent to preach the Gospel, or to teach children, or in any way to advance the kingdom of God, that you would not be any better fitted for your work if you had all the eloquence of a Cicero and all the learning of a Newton. You, as you are, can serve the Lord and can fill a certain place better, with all your drawbacks, than you could without those drawbacks. A sensible Christian will make use of his infirmities for God's glory.

There is a strange story that they tell of St. Bernard, a tradition which is believed, by some people, but which I look at as an allegory rather than as a matter of fact. He was going over the Alps towards Rome upon some business. The devil knew that the saint was about to do something that would greatly injure his kingdom, so he came and broke one of the wheels of the saint's carriage. Whereat Bernard called out to him, and said, "You think to stop me in this way, do you, Satan? Now you shall suffer for it yourself." So he took him and twisted him round, and made a wheel of him—and fastened him to the carriage—and then went driving on,

Now, the meaning of that allegory is that, when infirmities threaten to injure your usefulness, you are to use those infirmities in God's service. Turn the devil himself into a wheel and go ahead all the better because of the hindrance that he tried to cause. Why, it might be an advantage sometimes to be compelled by stammering to lay emphasis on a word.

And if ever I did feel myself now and then stuck in a hole by that process, I would take care to be stuck somewhere near the cross. Many a man has had the power to attract people by the very singularity which looked as if it must impair his usefulness. All our infirmities, whatever they are, are just opportunities for God to display His gracious work in us.

So it will be with all *the oppositions that we meet with*. If we serve the Lord, we shall be sure to meet with difficulties and oppositions—but they are only more opportunities for the works of God to be seen in us.

By and by, we shall come to die and *in our deaths*, God's work may be manifest. I wonder by what death we shall glorify God? Was not that a beautiful expression of John's, when the Savior spoke of Peter? He told Peter how he would die, but John does not put it so. He says, "By what death he should glorify God."

Perhaps it will be by a long, pining sickness. Some will be gradually dissolved by consumption. Well, you will glorify God by it. Those pale cheeks and that thin hand, through which the light will shine, will preach many a sermon on that sick bed. Or perhaps you will glorify God in some other fashion. You may have to die with bitter pangs of pain, but then, if the Lord cheers you and makes you patient, you will glorify God by that kind of death. You will look death calmly in the face, and not fret, and not be afraid.

You will have to die somehow, unless the Lord Himself shall come, and blessed be His name, He will take you home in a way that will somehow or other bring glory to His name, however it may be. So let us begin to rejoice in it even now.

May God bless these words of mine and may many, here, be eternal monuments of the boundless, sovereign grace of God. And unto Him be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 9:1-38

Verse 1. *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

The man could not see Jesus, but sight came to the man from Jesus. If there are any here who cannot look to Christ as yet, our prayer is that He may look on them as He looked on this blind man.

2. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Beloved, if you had Christ with you, you could occupy your time better than in asking such questions as this. And I think that when we go to Holy Scripture, we can do better than pry into things of small practical importance, or even into great mysteries. However, in this case, since the disciples were liable to fall into grave error, our Lord gave them instruction upon the matter that perplexed them.

3. Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

In other words, this man is not blind as the result of sin in himself or in his parents. He is blind in order that God may have a platform for the display of His gracious power in healing him.

4-5. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Our Savior felt that He was commissioned as a servant of His Father, sent here to do a certain work, and He must be doing it. It is well for God's servants to feel a holy compulsion—it does not take away from them the freedom of their action and their delight in the service of God—but still it exercises a powerful influence over a man when he feels, “Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel.”

Or when, like the Lord Jesus, he says, “I must work the works of him that sent me.” Did the Well-beloved, the Prince of Heaven, come under compulsion? Did He put Himself under that “must” which is for the King? Then you and I may well put ourselves under holy bondage for the Lord. There, do not hinder me. Do not tell me that I am too feeble in health—“I must work the works of him that sent me.”

6-7. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Our Lord often works miracles without means, and sometimes with means which appear to be quite inappropriate. It would seem to be more easy to blind a man with clay than to open his eyes with it. And there are some who assert that the Gospel plainly spoken would lead men into sin, but it does not. It is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” If you go to work in the name of God, if you put the clay on the sinner's eyes, and bid him go and wash, you will see what will happen.

8-11. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

Does he not tell his story well? If he had not been a blind man whose eyes had just been opened, he would have exaggerated somewhere or other. I never heard a man tell a tale with absolute correctness—it is not the way of people—they are sure to put in some little item by way of garnishing, for there is a bump of romance in most men's heads. But this shrewd, strictly honest man tells the story briefly and leaves out no important particular.

12-15. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

That was short and sweet—and when you have to deal with Pharisees, do not give them much—they are not worth it and they are sure to misuse it. When he spoke to the common people, he enlarged and gave them details, but now that he comes to talk to these pragmatic professors, he cuts it down to as few words as possible.

16. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*

Yes, and there is a division among the enemies of Christ always—they cannot agree among themselves. If they could always lay their heads together and agree, they might have greater power, but the Edomites draw their swords against the children of Ammon, and they are sure to slay one another in the long run. There were also some among these Pharisees who had a conscience, men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, and they asked, “How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?”

17. *They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*

He must be a prophet. He could not have worked such a miracle as that if He had been a common man—“He said, He is a prophet.”

18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.*

You see, John gives to the Pharisees the name which they arrogated to themselves—“we are Jews.” But they were not true Jews. They called themselves Jews and so John speaks of them as “the Jews.” It often happens that a certain clique or party will run away with a name which does not belong to them any more than it does to a great many who differ from them very widely. These Pharisees pretended that they would not believe the miracle. It was manifest before their eyes, but yet they would not believe it until they called his parents.

19-21. *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

This was very shrewd on their part, but I think that I must add that it was very cowardly to throw all the testimony on their son. There are some parents who, if their children do right, if they follow Christ, seem to leave them to take care of themselves.

22. *These words spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

Excommunicated—and they could not bear to be cut off from the respectable society which they had hitherto enjoyed.

23-24. *Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.*

Does it not sound pretty from their Pharisaic lips? Arch hypocrites pretending to teach a man who knew much better than themselves! “We know that this man is a sinner.” You did not know it, but we know it, and as we know it, and we are doctors, you must believe it.

25. *He answered and said, Whether he is a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

He could not be beaten out of that. You cannot argue a man out of an experience of this kind, and if the Lord Jesus Christ has ever opened your eyes, dear friend, nobody can make you doubt that blessed fact.

26-27. *Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?*

He threw a little sarcasm into that last question. The man was a very remarkable person—a simple-hearted, honest man—but withal quite able to hold his own in any company.

28. *Then they reviled him,*

It is a bad case, so abuse the plaintiff. There is nothing to be said for our side, so let us abuse the man who has had his eyes opened.

28-30. *And said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.*

Does not that manifestation of miraculous power show where He must have come from? Could He have come from anywhere but from God?

31-33. *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

Well argued! The case is proven, indeed.

34. *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach, us?*

Cannot you hear them say it? “A blind beggar, who has just begun to see, ‘Dost thou teach us?’—D.D.’s, men who are learned in the law—‘Dost thou teach us?’” Well, brethren, if a man has only one eye, he may teach those who have not any, for the old proverb says, “In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye is king.”

Yet there is another proverb on this subject and that is, “In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye gets hanged.” That was likely to be the case here—the blind Pharisees could not bear the man who could see. He knew too much for them.

34-36. *And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him.*

He wanted instruction. Christ may have done much for a man, but he may not as yet fully know the Lord. There may be some here tonight upon whom Christ has wrought a great deal, and yet you do not know Him as you will know Him—“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

37-38. *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

That is the way with a genuine believer—he worships Christ. Why? Because he believes Him to be God. It would be idolatry to worship Christ if He were only man, and Christ would have been an impostor if He had allowed this man to worship Him if he had not been God. But he was God, and we, believing Him to be God, worship Christ as very God of very God, to whom be praise forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—152, 369, 394

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